

adults in Central Florida and throughout the state. The Professional Opportunities Program for Students, Inc. (POPS) is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization founded by Florida State Senator Gary Siplin in February, 2001.

Senator Siplin had a dream to provide summer job opportunities to high school students in his community and he began that dream with five students. As the need for jobs increased, the graduation rate of students in the community began decreasing. Senator Siplin realized he needed to do more for these young people.

In 2008, POPS received a grant from the Department of Education to provide a year-round program that included mentorship, life skills workshops, community service, and paid internships to 200 students in Orlando, Florida. By 2010, POPS had grown to serve over 400 students and six additional cities: Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Pahokee/Belle Glade, St. Petersburg, Bartow/Lake Wales, and Ft. Lauderdale.

The mission of POPS is to provide personal and professional development for teenagers who face social, economic or environmental barriers that may impact the quality of their lives. POPS' work is rooted in collaboration among students, parents, schools, and community and business leaders.

The primary goal of the POPS program is to motivate diverse at-risk students to complete their high school education and prepare them for future success. POPS strives to reduce some of the at-risk factors through mentoring, counseling, character education, money management, and workforce development training. To achieve these goals, POPS focuses on assisting students in the completion of high school, motivating them to pursue an advanced education and obtain gainful employment.

The POPS program helps monitor demonstrable gains in academic achievement as well as increased attendance and graduation rates. POPS staff and mentors work to help achieve reduction in disciplinary actions and dropout rates and to increase engagement of students in education, cultural, and career experiences.

Through mentor relationships, improved parental involvement, and on-the-job-training and career exploration, the POPS program helps prepare students for college and entry into the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to recognize Florida State Senator Gary Siplin and the POPS program for their invaluable contributions to Florida's youth.

RECOGNIZING AUDREY DECKINGA

HON. JOHN R. CARTER

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate Audrey Deckinga on her retirement from Texas Child Protective Services. Over her 39 years of service to the Lone Star State, she has shown an unwavering commitment to the well-being of our most vulnerable citizens.

Audrey started her journey in the field of child welfare over 30 years ago as a foster parent. After beginning her professional career in CPS as a caseworker in Williamson County

in 1988, she rose through the ranks over the next 25 years to become the leader of a CPS statewide program with over 8,000 staff. She has served as Assistant Commissioner since 2009 and has impacted the child welfare arena on both state and national levels.

Under Audrey's advocacy and leadership, more children are served safely without a removal from their own homes. Adoptions have increased by more than 100%. After exiting the system, children are less likely to have a subsequent incident of abuse or neglect or to reenter state custody. These achievements bring to life the words of Fred Rogers, one of our nation's great champions for children, who said, "Justice is taking care of those who aren't able to take care of themselves."

Her work to do right for children doesn't stop at the end of the work day. Audrey remains involved in numerous state and national child welfare groups where she has developed a reputation as a forward-thinking supporter of policies that make a lasting difference in the lives of children.

Retirement is to be celebrated and enjoyed. It is not the end of a career, but rather the beginning of a new adventure. I commend Audrey Deckinga for her work improving the lives of families in Texas. I wish her only the best in the years ahead.

THANKING EMPLOYEES OF THE OFFICE OF THE SERGEANT AT ARMS FOR THEIR SERVICE TO THE HOUSE

HON. CANDICE S. MILLER

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

Mrs. MILLER of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the House of Representatives to pay tribute to eight outstanding and long-term employees of the Office of the Sergeant at Arms who will be retiring in the upcoming months:

John Boardman—Chamber Security Division staff.

Geraldine Cassidy—House Garages and Parking Security Division Staff.

Dennis Engel—House Garages and Parking Security Division Staff.

Karen Forriest—Identification Services Division staff.

Nicarsia Mayes—Chamber Security Division staff.

Linda Shealy—Emergency Management Division, Executive Assistant.

Bill Sims—Director of Chamber Security.

Lee Trolan—Emergency Management Division, Director, Continuity Planning.

Taken as a group, these exceptional public servants have served the House of Representatives and the federal government for a combined total of 242 years. I know we are deeply grateful to each of them for their many years of hard work, diligence, and sacrifice to this institution.

Taken individually, each has held positions of trust and responsibility within the Office of the Sergeant at Arms. From the Floor of the House, to the House Office Building garages, to the Identification Office, and Emergency Planning, their commitment to the Congress is second to none. Their institutional knowledge and skills, honed through years of hard work

and dedication, will be sorely missed by their colleagues, as well as by Members and staff alike. Every single one of them has much to be proud of as they reflect on long and distinguished careers.

Please join me in commending the outstanding service of John Boardman, Geraldine Cassidy, Dennis Engel, Karen Forriest, Nicarsia Mayes, Linda Shealy, Bill Sims, and Lee Trolan to the Congress of the United States and congratulating each on their retirement. On behalf of the U.S. House of Representatives we wish each of you well in all of your future endeavors.

CELEBRATING KEOGH HEALTH CONNECTION'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY

HON. KYRSTEN SINEMA

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask that my colleagues join me in celebrating Keogh Health Connection's Tenth Anniversary. This milestone represents a decade of excellence in connecting Arizona's uninsured population with affordable health care.

Keogh Health Connection was established in 2003, inspired by the passion for service held by its founders, Karlene and Kevin Keogh. This couple recognized that the available healthcare resources can only help those in need when people know how to access them. Through working with families and individuals on a case by case basis, and making referrals to an increasing number of partner organizations, this non-profit has shown tremendous growth over the past decade. It has served over 200,000 residents of Maricopa County, a number of which are in my district.

By taking action to fill a critical need in its community, Keogh Health Connection is truly commendable. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating this organization and its staff on reaching 10 years of service, and in wishing them many more successful years to come.

IN MEMORIAM: FRANCES XAVIER SOLOMON, II

HON. GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLAN

OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

Mr. SABLAN. Mr. Speaker, the people of the Northern Mariana Islands—and all the Pacific territories—lost a friend in August. Mr. Francis Xavier Solomon, II, veteran and public servant, passed away.

Mr. Solomon's service to our country ranged from his tour of combat in Vietnam to his career with the Department of the Interior. There, he helped develop telecommunications infrastructure in the islands and the financial management systems our young governments needed.

In his last 13 years he worked as a consultant to the Prior Service Retirement Trust Fund, which provides a pension to former employees of the U.S. Government in Micronesia.